

EXHIBIT 2

Dear NBOME Accommodation Committee:

I am requesting 100% extra time because I cannot process information at the same rate as the general population and therefore am unable to answer all the questions within the standard timeframe. The purpose of my personal statement is to address how professional evaluations combined with my experience coping with anxiety, panic disorder, trichotillomania, and depression justify my accommodation request to equally access the test alongside my fellow student doctors.

As I prepare for the COMLEX examination, I am reminded of the struggles I endured during the many years and five attempts I took to get through the MCAT exam. Without extended time, I never finished a single section of the exam, even when 25% extended time was implemented. When time was running out, I suffered panic attacks and filled in random answers. 25% extended time was not an appropriate accommodation as I was still unable to demonstrate my skill and knowledge because I was not able to complete the MCAT sections. During the 9/2019 MCAT attempt, I had a panic attack symptoms including: crying, shaking, hyperventilating, heart racing, sweating then chills, and muscle aches after the attack. The employee of the testing center saw me under distress and asked if I was okay. Neuropsychological testing performed by Dr. Shifrin and Psychoeducational testing performed by Dr. Erb fail to replicate the high degree of anxiety and panic I feel completing high stakes exams or real life activities. The COMLEX challenge my impairments to a greater degree than the MCAT and therefore 100% extended time, which is the same amount of extended time I receive in medical school, is an appropriate accommodation. I ended a five year engagement after my second failed MCAT attempt when my ex-fiancé no longer supported me in my dream to attend medical school. There was not a day that went by from my first attempt to opening my score after the fifth attempt that I did not think about the MCAT. Part of that might be due to the fact that my parents named our cat MCAT... I call him Emmie. I worked with private tutors, tried countless different prep companies' resources, completed a CARS specific bootcamp for reading comprehension, and even completed an intensive online bootcamp MCAT course. I reviewed material repeatedly, read aloud to myself while working through the practice exams, practiced writing out passage summaries before realizing that took too much time, and quit my job to have extra time to study. I cancelled and pushed back my exam many times due to being unable to finish the sections in the allotted time. With the pressure of the clock, I struggled to comprehend and remember what I had read in order to answer the questions. I constantly have to read and reread in order to process what a question is asking me. It was not until my final attempt when I decided to purposely plan on skipping 1-2 passage sets in each section, randomly guess on those unread questions, and dedicate that extra time to properly answering the other passages that I was able to get enough points for a medical school acceptance. Writing this personal statement to apply for accommodations makes me feel awful and inadequate. It has taken me weeks to complete this and over 30 hours: what if I forget a major detail the committee needs to know about?

Throughout childhood, I would take substantially longer than my peers to complete tasks. My first memory is in preschool sitting with the teacher's aid to finish my art project while my other classmates went outside for recess. In second grade, we had weekly times table math tests. Students were given a set amount of time to complete as many math questions as possible. I remember my heart racing prior to, during, and long after completing the test. To help ease my worry, I would practice timed exams at home and practice flash cards late into the night with a flash light underneath my blanket until my parents caught me and took the study material.

During class when we had to go around the room and read a section of the text aloud, I would determine which section I would be reading aloud and then practice the section until it was my turn.

That way I would be already familiar with the text and not be reading it for the first time in front of my peers. Additionally, while reading aloud, I would use my finger to keep track of where I was in the passage. Ever since childhood, I have always been one of the last students done with an exam or assignment. For instance, when we had to take the Pennsylvania System of School Assessment (PSSA) exams, I was removed from the class after my classmates had finished the assessment and allowed to work at my own pace in a separate room until I was done. To compensate for my below average processing speed since elementary school, I have received, used, and benefitted from extended time on exams. Even before the extent of my disability was realized, my teacher's identified my struggle with time limitations. In response, teachers at my elementary, middle, and high schools provided me with informal extended time accommodations on tests and assignments. Later in college, I made informal arrangements with professors for extended time on exams as well. My professors saw marked improvement in my academic performance when the pressure of time limitations were eliminated (see attached letters from primary school teachers and college professors).

I had to learn how to respectfully advocate for myself to adults from a young age. In fifth grade, my teacher would get angry at me for not being done with my test. She would allow my classmates to make noise while working on the next assignment, while I struggled to think and focus on my exam. I would sit at my desk plugging my ears with my fingers (or even wiggling my fingers in my ear canal) and reading the questions out loud to block out as much noise as possible. In ninth grade, my honors environmental science teacher accused me of cheating (talking during an exam) due to plugging my ears and reading the quiz questions aloud. He forced me to get up in front of the class before every assessment and to sit alone, but would not give me extra time. I recall greatly struggling to complete the quiz questions within the time limit, often having to blindly guess on the remaining questions as the other students passed their quizzes to the front. Additionally, in ninth grade, my 21st Century Computer Applications teacher would mock me in front of the entire class for coming to her class late with my hall pass if I was finishing up an exam from my AP Psychology class the previous period.

My anxiety began manifesting as stomach pains in high school. I would awaken in the night with what I called "stomach attacks". Gastroenterologists prescribed Nexium and Hyoscyamine, performed scopes, and found healed ulcers. They thought I had IBS and esophageal dysmotility. Prior to having one of the scopes, the Anesthesiologist joked "how can a young girl like you be so depressed". I was mortified, angry, and embarrassed someone would call me depressed, especially in front of my mom. As I progressed through high school and into college, I began shaking prior to taking examinations. In my college Calculus I class, my hands were shaking so badly while holding my calculator, that my professor quickly grabbed it and searched through the programming thinking my nerves were due to cheating. Even though I completed every single homework question and went to tutoring every single night, I struggled throughout Calculus I-III. One topic that was particularly difficult was integral by parts and trig sub in Calculus II. I severely ran out of time during that exam and failed. Subsequently, my calculus professor began meeting with me prior to class in order to pre-teach me the lesson so that I could better grasp what was being taught in class the following day. I was so upset after my calculus exam that I subsequently blanked out and failed my biology exam later that day. When I explained my situation to my biology professor, he allowed me to retake a verbal exam to show I understood the concepts, I earned a B instead of my previous failing grade allowing me to continue in the class and not withdrawal. Prior to my physics II final sophomore year, I remember feeling severely nauseous and experiencing heart palpitations. Whenever I couldn't sleep before an exam, I would turn my light on and continue to study as a way to ease my anxiety. Being one of seven Biochemistry majors in my year at Saint Vincent College, my professors knew

me personally. As a result, many would allow me to finish my exams in their office after the official class period had ended. I compensated for my testing anxiety by spending a significant amount of time researching the course catalogue and emailing potential professors for the syllabus ahead of course registration. I never signed up for a single college course where a midterm and final exam were the only grade. Instead, I registered for classes where as high a percentage of the grade as possible was not from exams. Additionally, I would pick classes from the same professor who previously allowed me more unofficial time to complete my exams in their office after the class period had ended.

I first learned of the existence of official accommodations for students when I was a Masters of Biomedical Science candidate at Rutgers University. (In primary school and college, many teachers voluntarily offered me additional time. Had I known in primary school that accommodations or a 504 plan were available for students with disabilities, I would have applied for extended time so that all of my instructors would have provided me with the additional time in order to have the same opportunity as peers and to ensure that my true knowledge and abilities were being assessed.). I learned about official accommodations because I had my first course withdraw from Medical Biochemistry due to getting an unrecoverable score on the first exam, the lowest score in the class. The Friday before the Monday exam, I had my first panic attack getting off the highway exit on the way home from school to my apartment. I was driving and talking about my day with my mom on the phone when suddenly I noticed my peripheral vision going black, my heart beating out of my chest, and my body getting extremely hot. I pulled off to the side of the road and called my friend who took me to the urgent care shaking and with body cramps. The Physician Assistant only measured my blood glucose and said I probably had white coat syndrome, I later learned that this was a panic attack. The Monday of my Medical Biochemistry exam was the first time I was in an exam room with more than 35 people. The lecture hall was very loud and I was very distracted and intimidated by all of my peers computer mice seemingly speeding through the exam while I struggled to read and comprehend a single exam question as the clock ticked away. I forced my mind to try and work through the answer choices, but I felt my heart racing and mind subsequently "going blank". I ran out of time and failed to answer over half of the exam. I will never forget the immense fear and panic that rushed through my body thinking I had just destroyed any hope I had of getting accepted into medical school. The two program directors quickly recommended I withdraw from the class to cover up my failure, and recommended I not apply to medical school. They mocked me during our 2 on 1 meeting for sitting cross legged with my hands clasped tightly as I picked the skin around my thumbs. My Medical Biochemistry professor met with me and knew my potential from our previous office hours meetings. When I asked her if I could finish my exam in her office, she looked at me confused and said this was a large institution and any exam accommodation had to be approved from an accommodation committee. She recommended I not take another course until I applied for and was approved for official exam accommodations.

Rutgers University's accommodation committee approved time and a half and private testing. However, I was severely traumatized from my Medical Biochemistry exam. During the fall 2017 semester, I had three exams in three days. I thought back to when I failed my calculus and biology exams back-to-back in undergrad and knew I could not let this happen again. I met with the test prep specialists to make the ultimate study schedule, studied every moment of the day and night, reviewed high yield concepts with my study group, and did lots of practice questions to try and simulate the exam day. However, at night I would awaken with my heart racing, sit up in bed, and rock back and forth breathing heavily. When I would sleep, I would have anxiety dreams such as the clock running out of time and awaken to a bed soaked in my sweat. I felt so incredibly low that I called a therapist for the first time in my life. She referred me to see a psychiatrist, Dr. Melanie Grubisha, who

diagnosed me with General Anxiety Disorder and Panic Disorder. She prescribed me Propranolol. Upon receiving a neuropsychological evaluation from Dr. Shifrin, the Rutgers's University accommodation committee approved double time on examinations and private testing. Upon review thereof, Rutgers agreed that my diagnosis and the consequences it had on my academic performance rendered formal accommodations both reasonable and necessary to ensure I was afforded an equal opportunity to meet my full academic potential. Rutgers promptly relied on the recommendations of medical experts. My Medical Embryology course was the first multiple choice assessment in my master's program where I was able to equally access the exam, read and complete every question on the examination.

In medical school, the first half of my first semester, I was only approved for time and a half on examinations and did not receive any accommodations (additional time or private testing) for anatomy practicals (no students were approved for anatomy practical accommodations). As a result, I did not pass my first two BECOM I exams and greatly struggled on my anatomy practicals. I advocated for myself to receive double time as per Dr. Shifrin's clinical evaluation report and the other accommodation students to receive separate testing during the anatomy practical. Halfway through the first semester, the school honored my double time on examinations and I passed the remaining 2 BECOM 1 examinations. (Please note my time data report from Dr. Ziegler verifying that I utilized most if not all of my accommodated time to the full measure during my first two years of medical school). Taking the practicals with the other students was incredibly stressful. The class was broken up into four large groups. Each group waited outside the anatomy lab for the professors to let us into the room. Students loudly talked to one another reviewing last minute concepts while waiting outside. I recall prior to the second anatomy practical, one of my classmates asked me a concept question before we entered the lab. I remember my heart racing and felt my mind going blank because I could not recall the structure to answer his question. Once inside the room my heart continued to race and my hands shook as I held my clipboard and pencil. Our practicals were fill in the blank and a loud chime rang when we were supposed to rotate to the next tagged structure. I struggled terribly to recall the tagged structure within the short period of time often having many blanks on my paper at the end of the practical. Instead of being able to focus on the tagged structure in front of me, my mind constantly told myself I was going to fail this practical, fail the semester, have to repeat the year under the same unaccommodated circumstances, and get dismissed from medical school. My anxiety only got worse as the year went on, I tried multiple compensatory strategies including listening to the chime sound played during the practical in an attempt to desensitize myself from the noise. Due to COVID, official mock practicals were not offered by my school, but I set up mock practicals with my friends. Additionally, I regularly stayed long after dissection reviewing the structures. I had an individual anatomy tutor whom regularly met and quizzed me. I did not pass anatomy by one point and had to remediate the class by completing an online anatomy class without dissection offered by another institution. I cannot help but believe that if my school provided me with my accommodations, that I could have scored one more point on one of the four practicals and passed the course. While completing my master's degree, we took anatomy with dissection and I was able to demonstrate my proficiency identifying tagged structures having additional time and private testing.

Even with my accommodations, I have continued to struggle throughout medical school. I avoid many pleasurable activities and opportunities in order to study all the time. At night, I have difficulty falling asleep and when I do fall asleep, I have anxiety dreams multiple times a week. I've had anxiety dreams since childhood, but they have become significantly more frequent in college. I often dream of taking an exam which I didn't know about and as a result haven't studied for. I dream

about running out of time on an exam. I dream that the semester is halfway over and I forgot about one of my courses and have missed all classes, assignments, and tests. I also dream about specific exams such as my medical biochemistry exam from my master's program. While working with my therapist, we had an EMDR session targeting my master's medical biochemistry exam. While I was taking my BECOM3 Exam 2 in medical school, there was a point during the exam where I saw my computer screen change in front of me to a flashback from a specific question from my medical biochemistry exam. Anytime I am helping my family with something and not studying, I initial feel joy then immediate guilt for time I spent away from the books. My significant other is a first-year resident. Although he understands the pressure and workload involved in medical school, our relationship has suffered because he feels neglected being his love language is time and we barely have time to talk.

My disabilities affect me on a continual basis, even outside the academic setting. My anxiety is not limited to exam taking. I struggle making commitments or any major life decisions without first consulting my parents, significant other, and close friends. I thoroughly research any purchase I make. When I dine in at a restaurant, I look up pictures of the dish I am interested in ordering and get the opinion of the server about the dish. Anytime I have to public speak, I hold a clip board to prevent my hand shaking from being noticeable, and I write my speech out word for word to prevent my mind from blanking. I practice my speech many times, but numerous times I have been so out of breath trying to public speak that the audience began whispering to one another as they could not understand me. Finally, I struggle playing trivia games with my family because they yell out the answer before I am even done reading the question.

Growing up, I was involved in many extracurricular activities including: competitive dance and violin. In dance, I had to practice extra hard to memorize the routine. During auditions, I would struggle compared to my peers because I was not able to learn the routines quickly. The only reason I made the dance team was I had a late audition number and a fellow dancer individually helped me practice the routine continuously until it was our turn to perform. I would work diligently throughout the school day to ensure my homework was done so I could participate. (My parents only would allow me to attend if they could ensure my homework would be perfect by the end of the evening.). In 6th grade, I danced so many hours a week, that I would bring my homework with me to lunch. My teacher got into an altercation about bringing work to the lunchroom with me, but I cried and told her I would not be allowed to attend dance if my homework was not done. I spent every spare moment of the school day working on my homework. At home, my parents would sit next to me and spend hours tutoring me from kindergarten up through high school. My homework took me exponentially longer than my peers. By high school, I did not have enough hours in the day to complete the amount of assigned homework and my grades began to drop, forcing me to quit dancing competitively, my passion.

Growing up, I had weekly violin lessons. I dreaded going to my lessons. I loved violin, but I never felt adequately prepared for my lesson. My nerves were visible as my hand shook causing my bow to bounce across the strings instead of smooth even strokes. My violin teacher told my mom to take me out of my honors courses so that I could spend more time practicing. When auditioning for honors orchestra, even if my audition piece was perfected, I was unable to stop my hand from shaking during my audition. As a result, my sound was terrible and I was the only one out of my friends to not make the competitive orchestra that year. On one occasion, the director knew how nervous I got during auditions, so she invited me to her house to audition individually with her. She set me up in

one room and went into another to avoid her presence making me anxious. I was able to perform the piece as practiced and made the competitive orchestra.

I struggled learning to drive a car. My parents made me so anxious that they had to hire a driving instructor. I struggled with the fear of needing to make split second decisions behind the wheel of the car. My mind went blank anytime my mom would yell at me to "Watch Out!"

My first memory of pulling my hair was in the third grade. I subconsciously pull my eyelashes and eyebrow hair out in school, orchestra, or watching tv. I would look down on my paper and notice a pile of hair. I would run to the bathroom and assess the damage and fill in the bald spots on my eyebrows with black sharpie. I self diagnosed myself with Trichotillomania in high school, but when I brought up this to my pediatrician, they shrugged it off and told me I just had a bad habit like other kids who bite their nails. Medical school was the first time I pulled out all of my eye lashes on both eyes and had to get permanent eyebrow microblading out of fear my make up would wear off and people would notice my bald eyebrows. I have tried to work through Trichotillomania in therapy and getting an emotional support assistance animal.

Overcoming my struggles I have outlined above is possible with therapy, medication, and accommodations. I have only been able to pass with accommodations and been able to show my potential in untimed situations. My disability has helped me to develop a very strong work ethic. Passing medical school is only possible to me because I am willing to seek out mentors and spending all day and night studying. I absolutely thrive in my clinical rotations and love learning medicine. I know my life's purpose is a career as a physician advocating and mentoring other medical students of the future

Sincerely,

Lauren Harbaugh